

NCA  
VOC FOR PGM/FN  
NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-0475  
JOHN ALBERT

MAY 16, 1978

THE TRIAL OF DISSIDENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION

ANNCR :

AFTER FIFTEEN MONTHS IN PRISON, SOVIET DISSIDENT YURI ORLOV WAS PUT ON TRIAL IN MOSCOW ON MONDAY. VOA NEWS ANALYST JOHN ALBERT HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS:

VOICE:

IT'S IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT THAT, IN THE AMERICAN VIEW, SHARED BY MANY OTHER COUNTRIES AS WELL AS SEVERAL WEST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES, THE ORLOV TRIAL -- AND OTHER SIMILAR TRIALS EXPECTED TO FOLLOW -- CANNOT BE DISMISSED AS SIMPLY AN INTERNAL SOVIET MATTER. THIS JUDGMENT IS BASED ON THE FACT THAT IN 1975 THIRTY-FIVE NATIONS, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION, SOLEMNLY PLEDGED AT HELSINKI TO OBSERVE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE TREATMENT OF THEIR OWN CITIZENS. BY THIS PLEDGE, AND BY THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES CONTAINED IN THE FINAL ACT OF HELSINKI, ALL PARTICIPATING STATES COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO RESPECT THE RIGHT OF THEIR PEOPLES TO FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, TO HUMAN CONTACTS ACROSS BORDERS, TO THE REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES, AND TO OTHER BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. THUS, AS PRESIDENT CARTER, SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE, AND THE CHIEF U.S. DELEGATE AT THE RECENT BELGRADE HELSINKI REVIEW CONFERENCE, ARTHUR GOLDBERG, HAVE REPEATEDLY POINTED OUT, THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT OBLIGES ALL SIGNATORY NATIONS TO SPEAK OUT WHENEVER THE LETTER OR THE SPIRIT OF THESE UNDERTAKINGS IS VIOLATED.

THIS IS WHY THE UNITED STATES HAS REPEATEDLY DEPLORED THE HARASSMENT AND PERSECUTION OF SOVIET DISSIDENTS WHO HAVE DONE NOTHING MORE THAN POINT OUT THE LACK OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

HELSINKI PRINCIPLES BY THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT. WASHINGTON REGARDS THE LONG IMPRISONMENT OF YURI ORLOV, AND FELLOW-DISSIDENTS ALEXANDER GINZBURG AND ANATOLY SHCHARANSKY, WHOSE TRIAL DATES HAVE NOT YET BEEN SET. AS A CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE HELSINKI AGREEMENTS.

YURI ORLOV IS CHARGED WITH SOMETHING CALLED "ANTI-SOVIET AGITATION," A CRIME CARRYING A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF SEVEN YEARS IN PRISON PLUS FIVE YEARS OF INTERNAL EXILE. BUT ALL ORLOV ACTUALLY DID WAS TO FORM A GROUP IN MOSCOW TWO YEARS AGO TO MONITOR SOVIET GOVERNMENT ACTIONS CONCERNING THE HUMANITARIAN PROVISIONS OF THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE. THE ORLOV COMMITTEE ISSUED A NUMBER OF REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY SOVIET AUTHORITIES, SUCH AS RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION, THE USE OF PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS AS POLITICAL PRISONS, ARBITRARY REFUSAL TO ALLOW REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES BY EMIGRATION, AND SUBSTANDARD LIVING CONDITIONS IN CRIMINAL WORK CAMPS. IF ALL THESE CHARGES HAD NO BASIS IN FACT, THE CHARGE OF SLANDER BY THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES MIGHT HAVE SOME SUBSTANCE. BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS AMPLE INDEPENDENT EVIDENCE AVAILABLE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE SOVIET UNION THAT THESE VIOLATIONS HAVE, INDEED, OCCURRED. THEY MAY WELL EMBARRASS THE SOVIET UNION, BUT THAT IS HARDLY THE FAULT OF SOVIET CITIZENS WHO REPORT THEM.

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS USED VARIOUS MEANS TO TRY TO PERSUADE THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES TO COMPLY WITH ITS HELSINKI PLEDGES. WASHINGTON HAS SPOKEN OUT PUBLICLY MANY TIMES, AND HAS ALSO INTERCEDED PRIVATELY ON BEHALF OF SOVIET DISSIDENTS. ALSO, THE QUESTION OF THESE TRIALS HAS BEEN RAISED WITH MOSCOW, YET THE SOVIET UNION HAS GONE AHEAD WITH THE TRIAL OF YURI

ORLOV. CLEARLY, IT IS JUST THE FIRST OF SIMILAR MOVEMENTS AGAINST THE DISSIDENTS. AND THIS FACT IS A MATTER OF SERIOUS INTERNATIONAL CONCERN.

WJL/GH/RCS